



Wait, What? You Want me to  
Talk about Sexuality?

**ELEVATUS** TRAINING

LEADERS IN SEXUALITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY



# Why Do People With Disabilities Need And Want To Learn About Sexuality

Self advocates say....

"So we can learn to have healthy  
relationships"

"So we aren't lonely!"

"So we are able to make informed  
choices!"

"So we can pick the right person!"



## Why Do People With Disabilities Need And Want To Learn About Sexuality

"For help with the toughest part of  
the relationship, making it last!"

"So we can be safe!"

"Because we all have  
desires/needs and that's okay!"

"So that people know their rights!"

"So we can be sexual self  
advocates, not just self  
advocates!"

# Sexual Self Advocacy

"Speaking up for yourself, sexually"

"Getting information"

"Taking a stand"

"Saying to whomever - this is my choice"

"Stating your sexual limits and desires with your partner, respecting others limits and desires"

"Starting to do what you want with relationships"

# I Got This: Staff Skills

## RESPECT

Is respectful of all people no matter what their skin color is, how much money they have, what religion they believe, who they are sexual with, and what kind of disability they have.

## ATTITUDES

Believes that everyone is a sexual being, deserves to get information about sexuality, and that it is okay to talk about this topic and ask questions.

## VALUES

Understands that people have different values and beliefs and respects those differences.

## SKILLS

Is able to communicate with others in a warm and kind way and knows how to help people feel comfortable talking about sexuality.

Is non-judgmental and open when talking about this topic.

Uses teachable moments and other tools to be a more effective communicator.

## INFORMATION

Knows lots of information about sexuality and relationships and knows where to get information if he or she doesn't have the answers.



## Your Role: Parents

- ▶ Provide information
- ▶ Listen
- ▶ Model
- ▶ Support
- ▶ Answer questions  
honestly
- ▶ Respond in a positive way about sexuality

# Agenda

Introduction

Human Sexual Development

Barriers we Face

Values and Attitudes

Tips for communicating

## What Is Sexuality?

- ▶ Sexuality means more than intercourse or sex.
- ▶ It's about intimacy, connection, and belonging.
- ▶ It's about relationships. Friendships and sexual.
- ▶ It's about how we feel about being the gender we are, gender identity and sexual orientation.
- ▶ It's about how we feel about others and ourselves.
- ▶ It's about sexual expression and behavior.
- ▶ It's the total of who we are, what we believe, what we feel, and how we respond.



# Messages, Messages, Messages

Turn to the person next to you  
and discuss:

What was the primary message  
you received about sexuality  
while growing up?

# Human Sexual Development

- Development of Biological Sex
- Gender Assignment
- Development of Gender Identity & Societal Gender Role
- Development of Values and Attitudes About Sexuality
- Physical and Emotional Changes of Puberty

# Human Sexual Development


- ▶ Development of Sexual Orientation
  - ▶ Affectional Attraction
  - ▶ Romantic Attraction
  - ▶ Erotic Attraction
- ▶ Development of Sexual Behavior
- ▶ Development of Sexual Identity

# Human Sexual Development

- ▶ Development of Sexual Knowledge
- ▶ Development of Sexual Skills

# INTERESTS, CONCERNS, AND BEHAVIORS: YOUNG CHILDREN

- ▶ Body parts and functions
- ▶ Genital touching
- ▶ Sex play
- ▶ Reproduction: “Where did I come from?”
- ▶ Roles as male/female
- ▶ Body image
- ▶ Need for privacy increases



# Interests, Concerns, And Behaviors: Adolescents

- ▶ Physical changes of puberty
- ▶ Hygiene: pimples and body odor
- ▶ Friendships
- ▶ Reproduction, Pregnancy, Birth,  
Pregnancy Options
- ▶ Sexual Expression
- ▶ Contraception and Sexually Transmitted Infections
- ▶ Sexual feelings
- ▶ Masturbation

# Interests, Concerns, And Behaviors: Adolescents

- ▶ Sexual Orientation
- ▶ Gender Identity
- ▶ Body Image
- ▶ Establishing and maintaining intimate relationships:
  - ▶ Ways of expressing affection
  - ▶ How to communicate with their partner
  - ▶ Deciding about having sex
  - ▶ Giving and receiving pleasure
- ▶ Breaking Up

# Interests, Concerns, And Behaviors: Adults

- ▶ Pregnancy, Birth
- ▶ Parenting
- ▶ Contraception, Sexually Transmitted Infections
- ▶ Masturbation
- ▶ Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity



# Interests, Concerns, And Behaviors: Adults

- ▶ Establishing and maintaining intimate relationships
- ▶ Separation/Divorce
- ▶ Body Image
- ▶ Menopause
- ▶ Changes in sexual functioning

# Small Group Discussion

- ▶ How is a person with a developmental disability's experience of developing the same as someone without a disability?
- ▶ How is a person with a developmental disability's experience of developing the different than someone without a disability?

# Same

- ▶ Assigned gender
- ▶ Gender roles reinforced
- ▶ Biological changes
- ▶ Need same information, based on biological age
- ▶ Have sexual feelings and needs
- ▶ Have dreams like anyone else might, relationship, babies



# Different

- ▶ Lack Basic Sexuality Information and Skills  
(asexual, oversexed, taken out)
- ▶ Considered Children: Behaviors are accepted or forgiven, protected (hugging, act your age)
- ▶ Nature of disability: Don't pick up on the social cues, need additional topics, trouble identifying emotions
- ▶ Lack friendships, social opportunities, miss informal learning, lonely
- ▶ Often lack privacy to explore their sexuality
- ▶ Many parents let go of dreams for child related to sexuality or think of them as not sexual, worry about higher rate of abuse
- ▶ How you teach topics is different
- ▶ May have a wide range of abilities and limitations

# Barriers

At your tables talk about this question:

When you think about talking about sexuality with people with disabilities or your own children with disabilities,, what barriers do you face or what barriers might staff/teachers have?

## Discussion

What were some of the barriers discussed?

# Values And Attitudes

Be honest

Remember to respect differences of opinion

Your job is to get clearer about your values, not to change everyone else's

# Values And Attitudes

- A person with a developmental disability who wants to have sexual intercourse/sex with a partner, while you are on duty.
- This same person wants to have sex, while you're on duty, with someone of the same sex.
- A person with a developmental disability who has multiple sex partners.
- A person with a developmental disability that likes to watch pornography and go to adult sex shops.
- A man with a developmental disability who likes to wear dresses.
- Two people with developmental disabilities want to get married and have a child.



# Small Group Discussion

Which were hardest for you and why?

# Small Group Discussion

What could happen if your told someone one of your values?

“You shouldn’t have sex until you are older”

How can you manage your values, “hot buttons” so they don’t come out?

**Parent’s role is giving values**

# Facts V. Values

- ▶ What is...
- ▶ True, proven
- ▶ Establish through observation and measurement

- ▶ What ought to be, should, or are supposed to be
- ▶ Statement of one's personal beliefs

# Values And Attitudes

Whether someone should:

be in a relationship or not

sexual with a partner or not

be in a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex or not

engage in certain sexual activities or not

get married or have children or not

view pornography or go to adult sex toy shops or not



# Common Values

Common values that we can all agree upon are OKAY to express:

It is important to respect others by treating them well and listening to them.

It is important to get consent from a sweetheart for being sexual.

Relationships should be equal and positive without violence or abuse.

# Tips And Tools For Answering Questions

- ▶ Tips for discussing
- ▶ Types of questions
- ▶ Teachable Moments Format
- ▶ How to respond to values/opinion and personal questions
- ▶ Practice

# Tips

- ▶ Give Positive Messages, inclusive language
- ▶ Don't have to know all the answers
- ▶ OK to feel embarrassed
- ▶ OK to answer later
- ▶ Give facts and a range of opinions
- ▶ Be concrete, graphic
- ▶ Use repetition
- ▶ Use the media, soap opera support group

# Types Of Questions

## **Factual, how to**

- ▶ What is a condom?
- ▶ How are babies made?
- ▶ How do I meet people?

## **Values, Opinions**

- ▶ Should I have sex?
- ▶ What contraception should I use?


## **Personal**

- ▶ When did you start having sex?
- ▶ Did you have sex last night?





# Factual: Teachable Moments

1. Reassure the person that it is good to ask questions.
  2. Find out what the person thinks/is really asking.
  3. Decide what message you want to give.
  4. Answer the question simply, using correct vocabulary.
  5. Encourage the person to give feedback.
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The Center for Sex Education, [www.SexEdCenter.org](http://www.SexEdCenter.org)

# Practice Answering Factual Questions

What is a boner?

# Practice Answering Factual Questions

How are babies made?

# Values/Opinions Questions

Should I have sex with my boyfriend?



# Personal Questions

Did you have sex last night?



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